

CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION NO. 2695

**A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 7, 1900
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING IN THE AUTUMN OF 1858**

"They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power."
Psalm 145:11

YOU have only to look at the preceding verse, and you will discover in a single moment, who are the people here spoken of who shall speak of the glory of God's kingdom and talk of His power. They are the saints, "All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. *They* shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." A saint will often be discovered by his conversation. He is a saint long before he knows it, he is a saint as being set apart unto salvation by God the Father in the covenant decree of election from all eternity, and he is a saint as being sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called.

But he is more especially a saint as being sanctified by the quickening influence of the Holy Ghost, which renders him truly sanctified by making him holy, and bringing him into conformity with the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Yet it is not at all times easy to discern a saint except by Scriptural marks and evidences. There is nothing particular about the countenance or dress of a saint to distinguish him from his fellows.

The saints have faces like other men, sometimes they are sadly marred and furrowed by cares and troubles which worldlings do not know. They wear the same kind of garments as other men wear, they may be rich or they may be poor, but still, there are some marks whereby we can discern them, and one of the special ways of discovering a saint is by his conversation. As I often tell you, you may know the quality of the water in a well by that which is brought up in the bucket, so may we tell a Christian by his conversation.

It is however, much to be regretted that true children of the Lord often talk too little of Him. What is the conversation of half the professors of the present day? Honesty compels us to say that in many cases, it is a mass of froth and falsehood, and in many more cases, it is altogether objectionable, if it is not light and frivolous, it is utterly apart from the Gospel, and does not minister grace unto the hearers.

I consider that one of the great lacks of the church nowadays, is not so much Christian preaching as Christian talking—not so much Christian prayer in the prayer meeting, as Christian conversation in the parlor. How little do we hear concerning Christ! You might go in and out of the houses of half the professors of religion, and you would never hear of their Master at all. You might talk with them from the first of January to the last of December, and if they happened to mention their Master's name, it would be, perhaps, merely as a compliment to Him, or possibly by accident.

Beloved, such things ought not to be. You and I, I am sure, are guilty in this matter, we all have need to reproach ourselves that we do not sufficiently remember the words of Malachi, "Then they that feared the LORD spoke often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name."

Possibly some will ask, "Well, sir, how can we talk about religion? Upon what topic shall we converse? How are we to introduce it? It would not be polite, for instance, in the company with which we associate, to begin to say anything about the doctrines of grace or about religious matters at all." Then, beloved, do not be polite, that is all I have to say in reply to such a remark as that. If it would be

accounted contrary to etiquette, to begin talking of the Savior, cast etiquette to the winds, and speak about Christ somehow or other.

The Christian is the aristocrat of the world, it is his place to make rules for society to obey—not to stoop down, and conform to the regulations of society when they are contrary to the commands of his Master. He is the great Maker of laws, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and He makes His people also to be kings. Kings make rules for ordinary men to obey, so must Christians do. They are not to submit to others, they must make others, by the worth of their principles and the dignity of their character, submit to them. It is speaking too lightly of a Christian's dignity when we say that he dare not do the right, because it would not be fashionable. We care nothing for that, for "the fashion of this world passeth away," "but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Another says, "What could I speak of? There are so few topics that would be suitable. I must not speak upon doctrinal subjects, for it would offend one of the party. They might hold different views, one might be a Wesleyan, one might be a Baptist, one might be an Independent, one a Calvinist, one an Arminian—how could I talk so as to please all? If I spoke of election, most of them would attack me at once, if I began to speak of redemption, we would soon differ on that subject, and I would not like to engender controversy."

Beloved, engender controversy rather than have wrong conversation, better dispute over truth than agree about lies. Better, I say, is it to dispute concerning good doctrine, far more profitable is it to talk of the Word of God, even in a controversial manner, than to turn utterly away from it, and neglect it.

But let me tell you, there is one point on which all Christians agree, and that is concerning the person, the work, and the blessed offices of our Savior. Go where you will, professors, if they are genuine Christians, will always agree with you if you begin to talk about your Savior, so you need not be afraid that you will provoke controversy, but supposing the mention of your Savior's name does provoke dispute, then let it be provoked. And if your Master's truth offends the gentlemen to whom you speak of it, let them be offended. His name we must confess, of His glory we will continually talk, for it is written in our text, "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power."

Now then, first, here is *a subject for conversation*, "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." Secondly, we will try to find out *some causes why Christians must speak concerning this blessed subject*, and then thirdly, I will very briefly refer to *the effect of our talking more of Christ's kingdom and power*.

I. First, here is A SUBJECT FOR CONVERSATION, "They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power."

Here are two subjects; for God, when He puts grace into the heart, does not lack a subject upon which we shall converse.

First, we are to converse concerning *the glory of Christ's kingdom*. The glory of Christ's kingdom should always be a subject of discourse to a Christian, he should always be speaking, not merely of Christ's priesthood or His prophesying, but also of His kingdom, which has lasted from all eternity, and especially of that glorious kingdom of grace in which we now live, and of that brighter kingdom of millennial glory, which soon shall come upon this world, to conquer all other kingdoms, and break them in pieces.

The psalmist furnishes us with some divisions of this subject, all of which illustrate the glory of Christ's kingdom. In the twelfth verse he says, "To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts." The glory of a kingdom depends very much on the achievements of that kingdom, so in speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, we are *to make known His mighty acts*.

We think that the glory of Old England—at least, our historians would say so—rests upon the great battles she has fought, and the victories she has won. We turn over the records of the past, and we see her, in one place, vanquishing thousands of Frenchmen at Agincourt, at another period we see the fleets of the Spanish Armada scattered by the breath of God. We turn to different battles, and we trace victory after victory, dotted along the page of history, and we say that this is the glory of our kingdom.

Now, Christian, when you speak of the glory of your Master's kingdom, you must tell something of His great victories—how He routed Pharaoh, cut the Egyptian Rahab, and wounded the dragon of the Nile, how He slew all the firstborn in one night, how, at His command, the Red Sea was divided, how the children of Israel crossed over in safety, and the chivalry of Egypt was drowned in the flood. Talk ye also of how God overcame Amalek, and smote Moab, how He utterly cut off those nations that warred against Israel, and caused them to pass away forever.

Tell how Babylon and Nineveh were made to rue the day when God smote them with His iron hand. Tell ye to the world how God has crushed great nations and overcome proud monarchs, how Sennacherib's hosts were left dead within their camp, and how those that have risen up in rebellion against God have found His arm too mighty for their strength and prowess. Tell of the terrible acts of our Savior's kingdom, record His victories in this world, nor cease there. Tell how our Savior routed the devil in the wilderness when he came to tempt Him. Tell how He—

*"All His foes to ruin hurled,
Sin, Satan, earth, death, hell, the world."*

Tell how He has bruised the head of Satan. Tell how death has lost his prey. Tell how hell's deepest dungeons have been visited, and the power of the prince of darkness utterly cut off. Tell ye how antichrist himself shall sink like a millstone in the flood. Tell how false systems of superstition shall flee away, like birds of night when the sun rises too brightly for their dim sight to bear. Tell all this, tell it in Askelon and in Gath, tell it the wide world over, that, the Lord of hosts is the God of battles, He is the conqueror of men and of devils, He is Master in His own dominions. Tell ye the glory of His kingdom, and rehearse "His mighty acts." Christian, exhaust that theme if you can.

Then, in speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, the next thing we talk of is *its glorious majesty*. The psalmist further says, in the twelfth verse, that the saints shall not only "make known God's mighty acts, but also the glorious majesty of his kingdom."

Part of the glory of England consists not in her achievements, but in the state and majesty which surround her. In ancient times especially, monarchs were noted for the great pomp with which they were surrounded. Thousands of houses must be razed to the ground to find a site for one dwelling for a king. His palace must be gorgeous with riches, its halls must be paved with marble, and its walls set with jewels, fountains must sparkle there, there must be beds of eider on which monarchs may recline, music, such as other ears do not hear, wines from the uttermost regions of the earth, and all manner of delights are reserved for kings, precious stones and gems adorn their crowns, and everything that is rich and rare must be brought to deck the monarch, and increase the majesty of his kingdom.

Well, Christian, when speaking of Christ's kingdom, you are to talk of its majesty. Tell of your Savior's glorious majesty, speak of the many crowns that He wears upon His head. Tell of the crown of grace which He wears continually, tell of the crown of victory which perpetually proclaims the triumphs He has won over the foe, tell of the crown of love wherewith His Father crowned Him in the day of His espousals to His church—the crown which He has won by ten thousand hearts which He has broken, and untold myriads of spirits which He has bound up.

Tell to all mankind that the glory of your Savior's majesty far exceeds the glories of the ancient kings of Assyria and India. Tell that, before His throne above, there stand, in glorious state, not princes, but angels, not servants in gorgeous liveries, but cherubs, with wings of fire, waiting to obey His mighty behests. Tell that His palace is floored with gold, and that He has no need of lamps, or even of the sun to enlighten it, for He Himself is the light thereof. Tell ye to the whole world what is the glorious majesty of His kingdom.

But once more, Christians, in speaking of the glory of Christ's kingdom, you must talk of *its duration*, for much of the honor of the kingdom depends upon the time it has lasted. In verse thirteen,

the psalmist says, "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."

If one should say to you, concerning an earthly monarch, "Our king sits upon a throne which his ancestors have occupied for many generations," tell him that a thousand years are to your King but as one day. If another tells you that his king has crowns which were worn by kings a thousand years ago, smile in his face, and tell him that a thousand years are as nothing in Christ's sight.

When they speak of the antiquity of churches, tell them that you belong to a very ancient church. If they talk to you of the venerable character of the religion which they profess, tell them that you believe in a very venerable religion, for yours is a religion which was from everlasting. Christ's kingdom was set up long before this world was brought forth, when as yet neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, had been created, Christ's kingdom was firmly established.

I wish Christians would more often talk about the glory of their Master's kingdom with regard to the time it has lasted. If you would begin to talk of the past history of God's church, you would never have to exclaim, "I have said all that can be said about it, and I have nothing more to say." You would need eternity to keep on going back, back, back, until you came to God alone, and then you might say—

*"In His mighty breast I see,
Eternal thoughts of love to me."*

Then you may speak concerning the future duration of your Master's kingdom. I suppose, if you were to talk much about the second coming of Christ, you would be laughed at, you would be thought diseased in your brain, for there are so few nowadays who receive that great truth, that if we speak of it with much enthusiasm, people turn away and say, "Ah! we do not know much about that subject, but Mr. So-and-so has turned his brain through thinking so much about it." Men are therefore, half afraid to speak of such a subject, but beloved, we are not afraid to talk of it, for Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and we may talk of the glory of the future as well as of the past.

Some say that Christ's church is in danger. There are many churches that are in danger, and the sooner they tumble down, the better, but the church of Christ has a future that shall never end, it has a future that shall never become dim, it has a future which shall eternally progress in glory. Her glory now is the glory of the morning twilight, it soon shall be the glory of the blazing noon. Her riches now are but the riches of the newly opened mine, soon she shall have riches much more abundant and far more valuable than any she has at present.

She is now young, but by and by, she will come, not to her dotage, but to her maturity. She is like a fruit that is ripening, a star that is rising, a sun that is shining more and more unto the perfect day, and soon she will blaze forth in all her glory, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

O Christian, here is a topic worthy of your conversation! Talk of the glory of your Master's kingdom. Often speak of it while others amuse themselves with stories of sieges and battles, while they are speaking of this or that or the other event in history, tell them the history of the monarchy of the King of kings, speak to them concerning the fifth great monarchy in which Jesus Christ shall reign forever and ever.

But I must not forget to briefly hint at the other subject of the saints' conversation, "*and shall talk of thy power.*" It is not simply of Christ's kingdom of which we are to speak, but also of His power. Here, again, the psalmist gives us something which will help us to a division of our subject. In the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, mention is made of three kinds of power of which we ought to speak, "The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season."

First, the Christian should speak of *Christ's upholding power*. What a strange expression this is, "The LORD upholdeth all that fall"! Yet remember John Bunyan's quaint old saying—

***"He that is down needs fear no fall;
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble, ever shall
Have God to be his guide."***

So David Says, “The LORD upholdeth all that fall.” What a singular expression! How can He hold up those that fall? Yet those that fall, in this sense, are the only persons that stand. It is a remarkable paradox, but it is true. The man who stands on his feet and says, “I am mighty—I am strong enough to stand alone”—down he will go, but he who falls into Christ’s arms, he who says—

***"But oh! for this no power have I,
My strength is at Thy feet to lie;"***—

that man shall not fall. We may well talk then, of Christ’s upholding power. Tell it to Christians, tell how He kept you when your feet were going swiftly to hell; how, when fierce temptations beset you, your Master drove them all away; how, when the enemy was watching, He compassed you with His mighty strength; how, when the arrows fell thickly around you, His mighty arm did hold the shield before you, and so preserved you from them all. Tell how He saved you from death, and delivered your feet from falling by making you, first of all, fall down prostrate before Him.

Next, talk of *His exalting power*, “He raiseth up all those that be bowed down.” Oh, how sweet it is, beloved, sometimes to talk of God’s exalting power after we have been bowed down! I love to come into this pulpit, and talk to you as I would in my own room. I make no pretensions to preaching at all, but simply tell you what I happen to feel just now.

Oh, how sweet it is to feel the raisings of God’s grace when you have been bowed down! Cannot some of us tell that, when we have been bowed down beneath a bed of affliction, so that we could not even move, the everlasting arms have been around us, and have lifted us up! When Satan has put his foot on our back, and we have said, “We shall never be raised up any more,” the Lord has come to our rescue.

If we were only to talk on that subject in our conversation with one another, no Christian need have spiritless conversation in his parlor. But nowadays, you are so afraid to speak of your own experience, and the mercy of God to you, that you will talk any stuff and nonsense rather than that. But I beseech you, if you would do good in the world, rehearse God’s deeds of raising up those that are bowed down.

Moreover, talk of God’s *providing power*, “The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.” We ought often to speak of how God provides for His creatures in providence. Why should we not tell how God has taken us out of poverty, and made us rich, or if He has not done that for us, how He has supplied our wants day by day in an almost miraculous manner?

Some persons object to such a book as Huntington’s, “Bank of Faith,” and I have heard some respectable people call it, “The Bank of Nonsense.” Ah! if they had ever been brought into Huntington’s condition, they would see that it was indeed a bank of faith, and not a bank of nonsense, the nonsense was in those who read it, in their unbelieving hearts, not in the book itself. And he who has been brought into many straits and trials, and has been divinely delivered out of them, would find that he could write a “Bank of Faith” as good as Huntington’s if he liked to do so, for he has had as many deliverances, and he could rehearse the mighty acts of God, who has opened His hands, and supplied the wants of His needy child.

Many of you have been out of situation, and you have cried to God to furnish you with one, and you have had it. Have you not sometimes been brought so low, through painful affliction that you could not rest? And could you not afterwards say, “I was brought low, and He helped me”? Yes, “I was brought low, and He helped me out of my distress.”

Yes, I see some of you nodding your heads, as much as to say, “We are the men who have passed through that experience, we have been brought into great straits, but the Lord has delivered us out of

them all." Then do not be ashamed to tell the story. Let the world hear that God provides for His people. Go, speak of your Father. Do as the child does, who, when he has a little cake given to him, will take it out and say, "Father gave me this."

Do so with all your mercies, go and tell all the world that you have a good Father, a gracious Father, a heavenly Provider, and though He gives you a handbasket portion, and you only live from hand to mouth, yet tell how graciously He gives it, and that you would not change your blest estate for all the world calls good or great.

II. I must be brief in speaking upon THE CAUSES WHICH WILL MAKE CHRISTIANS TALK OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND HIS POWER.

One cause is that *it is the kingdom of their own King*. We do not expect French people to talk much about the victories of the English, and I suppose there is no Russian who would pay very many compliments to the prowess of our arms, but they will all talk about their own monarchs. Well, that is the reason why a Christian should speak of the glory of his Master's kingdom, and tell of His power, because it is the kingdom of his own King. Jesus Christ may be or may not be another man's King, but certainly He is mine, He is the Monarch to whom I yield absolute submission. I am no longer an alien and a stranger, but I am one of His subjects, and I will talk concerning Him because He is my King.

Secondly, the Christian must talk of the King's victories, *because all those victories were won for him*, He recollects that his Master never fought a battle for Himself—never slew an enemy for Himself. He slew them all for His people. And if for me—a poor abject worm—my Savior did this, shall I not talk of the glory of His kingdom, when He won all that glory for me? Will I not speak of His power, when all that power was exercised for me? It was all for me. When He died, He died for me; when He suffered, He suffered for me; and when He led captivity captive, He did it for me. Therefore, I must and will speak of His dear name. I cannot help testifying to the glory of His grace in whatever company I may be.

Again, the Christian must talk of it, *because he himself has had a good share in fighting some of the battles*. You know how old soldiers will "shoulder their crutch, and tell how fields were won." The soldier home from the Crimea, when he reads the accounts of the war, says, "Ah! I know that trench, I worked in it myself. I know the Redan, I was one of the men who attacked it." He is interested because he had a share in the battle. "*Quorum pars magna fui*," said the old soldier, in the days of Virgil, so we, if we have had a part in the battle, like to talk concerning it.

And beloved, it is this which makes our battles dear to us, we help to fight them. Though there was one battle which our great Captain fought alone, and "of the people there was none with him," yet in other victories, He has permitted His people to help crush the dragon's head. Recollect that you have been a soldier in the army of the Lord, and that in the last day, when He gives away the medals in heaven, you will have one; when He gives away the crowns you will have one. We can talk about the battles, for we were in them; we can speak of the victories, for we helped to win them. It is to our own praise as well as to our Master's when we talk of His wondrous acts.

But the best reason why the Christian should talk of his Master is this, *if he has Christ in his heart, the truth must come out*, he cannot help it. The best reason in all the world is the woman's reason, who said she should do it because she would do it. So it often happens that the Christian cannot give us much reason why he must talk about his Savior, except that he cannot help it, and he will not try to help it. It is in him, and it must come out. If God has put a fire inside a man's heart, do you think it can be kept down? If we have grace in our souls, will it never come out in conversation?

God does not put His candles in lanterns, through which they cannot be seen, but He sets them on candlesticks, He does not build His cities in valleys, but He puts them on hills, so that they cannot be hid. So He will not allow His grace to be concealed.

A Christian cannot help being discovered. None of you ever knew a secret believer—a secret Christian. "Oh!" you say, "I am sure I have known such a man." But look you, he could not have been a secret believer if you knew him, he could not be wholly secret, the fact that you knew him proves that he

could not have been a secret Christian. If a man says that nobody knows a thing, and yet he knows it, he contradicts himself. You cannot then, know a secret believer, and you never will.

There may be indeed, some who are secret for a time, but they always have to come out, like Joseph of Arimathaea, when he went and begged for the body of Jesus. Ah! there are some of you sitting in your pews who fancy I shall never discover you, but I shall see you in the vestry by and by. Some of you keep on coming Sunday after Sunday, and you say, "Well, I must go by and by, and make a profession of faith." Yes, you will not be able to sit there long, if you have the grace of God within you, you will be obliged to come out, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ by being baptized in His name. Why not do so without further delay? If you love your Lord's name, come out at once, and own it.

III. Lastly, WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT OF OUR TALKING MORE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM AND POWER?

The first effect would be *that the world would believe us more*. The world says, "What a parcel of hypocrites Christian people are!" And they are about right concerning a good many of you. The world says, "Why, just look at them! They profess a deal of religion, but if you hear them talk, they do not speak differently from other people. They sing loudly enough, it is true, when they go to church or chapel, but when do you hear them sing at home? They go to the prayer meeting, but have they a prayer meeting at their own family altar? Believe them to be Christians? No! Their lives give the lie to their doctrines, and we do not believe them." If we oftener talked of Christ, I am sure the world would think us to be better Christians, and they would, no doubt, say so.

Again, if our conversations were more concerning Christ, *we, as Christian men, should grow faster, and be more happy*. What is the reason of the bickerings and jealousies between Christians? It is because they do not know one another. Mr. Jay used to tell a story about a man going out, one foggy morning, and seeing something coming in the fog, he thought it was a monster. But by and by, as he came nearer, he exclaimed, "Oh, dear me! that's my brother John!" So it often happens, when we see people at a distance, and hold no spiritual conversation with them, we think they are monsters. But when we begin to talk together, and get near to one another, we say, "Why, it is brother John, after all!"

There are more true brethren about us than we dream of. Then, I say, let your conversation, in all companies, wherever you may be, be so seasoned with salt that a man may know you to be a Christian. In this way, you would remove bickerings better than by all the sermons that could be preached, and be promoting a true Evangelical Alliance far more excellent and efficient than all the alliances which man can form.

Again, if we oftener talked of Christ like this, *how useful we might be in the salvation of souls!* O beloved, how few souls have some of you won to Christ! It says, in the Canticles, "There is not one barren among them," but are not some of you barren—without spiritual children? It was pronounced as a curse upon one of old that he should die childless. Oh! I think that, though the Christian is always blessed, it is half a curse to die spiritually childless.

There are some of you who are childless tonight. You never were the means of the conversion of a soul in all your lives. You hardly remember having tried to win anyone for the Savior. You are good religious people so far as your outward conduct is concerned. You go to the house of God, but you never concern yourselves about winning souls for Jesus. O my God, let me die when I can no longer be the means of saving souls! If I can be kept out of heaven a thousand years, if you will give me souls as my wages, let me still speak for You, but if there are no more sinners to be converted—no more to be brought in by my ministry—then let me depart, and be "with Christ, which is far better."

Oh, think of the crowns that are in heaven! "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." So many souls, so many gems! Have you ever thought what it would be to wear in heaven a starless crown? All the saints will have crowns, but those who win souls will have a star in their crown for every soul.

Some of you, my friends, will wear a crown without a star, would you like that? You will be happy, you will be blessed, you will be satisfied I know, when you will be there, but can you bear the thought of

dying childless—of having none in heaven who shall be begotten unto Christ by you—never having travailed in birth for souls—never having brought any to Christ? How can you bear to think of it? Then, if you would win souls beloved, talk about Jesus. There is nothing like talking of Him, to lead others to Him.

I read of the conversion of a servant the other day. She was asked how she came to know the Lord. “Well,” she said, “my master, at dinner, happened to make some simple observation to his sister across the table.” The remark certainly was not addressed to the servant, and her master had no notion that she was listening, yet his word was blessed to her. It is well to talk behind the door that which you do not mind hearing afterwards in the street, it is good to speak that in the closet which you are not ashamed to listen to from the housetop, for you will have to listen to it from the housetop by and by, when God shall come and call you to account for every idle word you have spoken.

Souls are often converted through godly conversation. Simple words frequently do more good than long sermons. Disjointed, unconnected sentences are often of more use than the most finely polished periods or rounded sentences. If you would be useful, let the praises of Christ be ever on your tongue, let Him live on your lips. Speak of Him always, when you walk by the way, when you sit in your house, when you rise up, and even when you lie down, it may be that you have someone to whom it is possible that you may yet whisper the Gospel of the grace of God.

Many a sister has been brought to know the Savior by a sister’s pleadings that were only heard in the silence of the night. God give you, beloved, to fulfill our text! “They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.” They *shall* do it, mark you, God will make you do it if you are His people. Go and do it willingly.

Begin, from this time forth, and keep on doing it forever. Say, concerning other conversation, “Begone far hence! Avaunt! This shall be my constant and only theme.” Be like the harp of old Anacreon, which would never sound any other note but that of love. The harpist wished to sing of Cadmus, and of mighty men of wisdom, but his harp would resound of love alone.

Be, then, like Anacreon’s harp—sing of Christ alone! Christ alone! Christ alone! Jesus, Jesus only! Make Him the theme of your conversation, for “they shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power.” God give you grace so to do, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 137

Verses 1-2. *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.*

Babylon was full of canals and rivers, the captive Israelites sought out lonely places where they might be away from their oppressors, and might in the company of their countrymen pour out the sad stream of their griefs and sorrows. “The rivers of Babylon” seemed congenial to them, and they mingled their tears with the flowing waters. They “sat down” as if they felt they were to be there a long while, and were not soon to go back to their own land and they “wept”—not simply because of their banishment and their woes, but also because of the mournful condition of their beloved Zion, which had been ravaged by the Chaldeans, plowed as a field, and given over to desolation.

Some of these poor captives had been singers in the courts of the Lord’s house which had been burnt with fire, and others had brought their “harps” with them into their captivity, but they could not find any music in their hearts, and therefore they fetched no melodious notes out of their harp strings. They did not break their harps, however, for they might want them some day, so they hung them up on the weeping willows which abounded by the water. Then came one of the sharpest trials they had ever had—a piece of bitter cruelty on the part of their oppressors, who had no compassion upon the poor prisoners whom they had taken from their own land.

3. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

As no cups except those that were taken out of God's holy house would do for Belshazzar when he wanted to make himself drunk, so no music would suit these heathen captors of Israel but the songs of God's house, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." These poor people were crestfallen and utterly broken down, yet their enemies cried, "Make mirthful music for us, sing us one of your sacred songs." They only wanted to laugh at it, or at the very best, to listen to it simply as a piece of music that they might criticize, so they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." But the captives could not and would not sing for any such purpose. Zion's songs were not meant to be sung for mere amusement, nor were her chants intended to be made the theme of mockery and ridicule by the ungodly.

4-5. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

"No," they said, "if we were to make mirth for the Babylonians, we should be doing serious damage to Zion, we should be traitors to Jerusalem," so the harpers said, "Sooner than we will play a tune to make mirth for you, let our right hands become paralyzed."

6. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth;

They said it each one for himself, they would sooner be dumb than sing these sacred songs for the amusement of the ungodly revelers who had gathered round them. Instead of a song, they offered a prayer which must have sounded terrible in the ears of those who mocked them, it was a fierce prayer—a prayer made under a very different dispensation from that under which we live—a prayer by a patriot who had seen his wife murdered, and his children dashed to pieces, and he prayed thus—

6-7. If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

Those Edomites, who ought to have been like brothers to the Jews, were their most ferocious enemies, and they stirred up the Chaldeans to be more terribly cruel than they otherwise would have been.

8-9. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, who rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

For these people had gone all over the world wherever they could, murdering and mutilating. Tens of thousands of little children had they brutally killed, multitudes of women had they ravished, a vast number of cities had they destroyed. They were the scourges of all nations, and therefore, moved to righteous indignation, the Jews felt that anybody who should overthrow that city of Babylon, and put to death its inhabitants, would be doing good service to the rest of mankind. And mark you, all this came to pass in due time.

When Cyrus turned aside the waters of the river which had been Babylon's great protection, and left the riverbed quite dry, he marched his troops right into the center of the city, and when the Babylonians, to defend themselves and a part of the city, were driven to great straits, we are told by historians that they destroyed their own wives and children, calling them useless mouths, that they might be able to defend themselves a little longer from the sword of Cyrus, so that, literally, it came to pass that the man who had destroyed his own children thought himself happy to be rid of them that he might maintain the fight. How dreadful is God when He deals with nations that have been cruel and ferocious! Go ye to Babylon this day, and see what ruinous heaps He has made, what desolation He hath wrought in that land.

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